

Name of Practice: SMALL ACREAGE GRAZING SYSTEM
DCR Specifications for No. SL-6A

This document specifies terms and conditions for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's small acreage grazing systems best management practice that are applicable to all contracts entered into with respect to that practice.

A. Description and Purpose

To reduce soil erosion in pastures and prevent those areas exposed to heavy livestock traffic from experiencing excessive manure and soil losses due to the destruction of ground cover, and eliminate direct access to, or a direct runoff input to live streams where there is a defined water quality problem.

Small acreage grazing systems frequently require the use of a heavy use area to remove livestock from pastures in wet conditions or when the pastures need to rest and recover. These sacrifice area paddocks quickly become denuded of vegetation and may harbor undesirable plants. Conditions in these paddocks are often unfavorable to livestock as well as the surrounding environment due to the build-up of manure in the paddock and the erosion that may take place on denuded soil.

The intent of this practice is to prevent manure and sediment runoff from a heavy use area and pastures from entering watercourses and to capture a portion of the manure as a resource for other uses such as fertilizer. This is accomplished by dividing the pasture into grazing paddocks. Livestock is rotated from paddock to paddock as is necessary to maintain a permanent vegetative cover. One lot is stabilized and designated as a heavy use area for use in periods of wet weather and when the grass in the grazing paddocks needs to rest in order to re-grow to the appropriate grazing height.

B. Policies and Specifications

1. Tax credit is authorized to protect surface water, supply water troughs and stabilize a heavy use area
 - i. Tax Credit will not be authorized for any operation where the stocking rate exceeds two (2) animal units (1,000-pound equivalent) per acre on the existing pastures.
 - ii. This Best Management Practice (BMP) cannot compensate for over stocking. A stocking rate of no greater than two (2) animal units (1,000-pound equivalent) per acre must be maintained throughout the life span of the practice.
2. A grazing management plan, practice design, and operation and maintenance (O & M) plan are to be developed with consultation from a VCE Agent specializing in the alternative livestock (if available) and NRCS and/or District.
3. A minimum of three grassed grazing paddocks is required.

4. A heavy use area is required.
 - i. Manure, hay, bedding, and other organic materials must be removed from the sacrifice area at intervals outlined in the operation and maintenance plan. The sacrifice area must be maintained in a sanitary condition that does not allow for the accumulation of manure or the creation of mud.
 - ii. The sacrifice area should be sized to allow 600 to 1,000 square feet per animal unit (1,000-lb. equivalent). Consideration should be given to the age, sex, breed, and behavioral characteristics of the animals when determining the final size and number of sacrifice areas needed. The heavy use area shall be sloped not to exceed 10% maximum.
 - iii. Divert surface water and roof runoff away from the sacrifice area.
 - iv. Provide filtering of runoff from the heavy use area.
 - v. The primary use of the heavy use area shall be within the purpose of establishing a small acreage grazing system. Design considerations shall not be given to its use as a riding or exercise area or any purpose other than to perform its water quality benefit.
5. Each grassed grazing paddock will be sized based on soil type, topography and herd size and be maintained in at least 80% coverage of permanent forage.
6. Livestock must be excluded from all streams. A minimum 35-ft.wide vegetated buffer shall be maintained directly adjacent to all streams, ponds, and other watercourses.
7. Walkways may be installed to facilitate herd movement from the barn to the heavy use area and grazing paddocks. Walkways are to be designed in accordance with NRCS standard 575 (Animal Trails and Walkways).
8. In order for the forage in the grass paddocks to take up nutrients such as nitrogen it must be managed for growth and harvested for hay or pasture.
9. Critical eroding and sensitive areas will be fenced out and permanent cover established.
10. An animal waste management system plan shall be developed as required by NRCS standard 561-Heavy Use Protection. The nutrient management plan shall address all the acreage on the participant farms where manure will be applied. The nutrient management plan shall be implemented and maintained for the life of the practice.
11. Tax credit is authorized for; watering facilities, stream exclusion and interior paddock fencing, excavation, and site preparation, geotextile fabric, stone, pipeline, and watering troughs. Tax credit is not authorized for heavy use sacrifice areas that exceed the allowable sizing limitation as outlined in (4) (b), or the designated use requirement in 4 (e).

12. In order to be eligible for cost-share or tax credit, producers must be fully implementing a current Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) on all agricultural production acreage contained within the field that this practice will be implemented on. The NMP must comply with all requirements set forth in the Nutrient Management Training and Certification Regulations, (4VAC50-85 et seq.) and the Virginia Nutrient Management Standards and Criteria (revised July 2014), must be prepared and certified by a Virginia certified nutrient management planner, and must be on file with the local District before any cost-share payment is made to the participant. Plans shall also contain any specific production management criteria designated in the BMP practice (4VACV50-85-130G).
13. This practice is subject to the requirements of applicable NRCS Standards. These may include 342 Critical Area Planting, 362 Diversion, 376 Roofs and Covers, 382 Fence, 391 Riparian Herbaceous Cover, 393 Filter Strip, 412 Grassed Waterway, 516 Livestock Pipeline, 528 Prescribed Grazing, 561 Heavy Use Area Protection, 574 Spring Development, 575 Trails and Walkways, 558 Roof Runoff Structures, 614 Watering Facilities, and 642 Water Well.
14. All practice components implemented must be maintained for a minimum of 10 years following the calendar year of installation. The lifespan begins on Jan. 1 of the calendar year following the year of implementation. By accepting a state tax credit for this practice the participant agrees to maintain all practice components for the specified lifespan. This practice is subject to spot check by the District throughout the lifespan of the practice and failure to maintain the practice may result in reimbursement of cost share and/or tax credits.

C. Rate(s)

1. As set forth by Virginia Code § 58.1-339.3 and §58.1-439.5, Virginia currently provides a tax credit for implementation of certain BMP practices. The current tax credit rate, which is subject to change in accordance with the Code of Virginia, is 25% of the total eligible cost not to exceed \$17,500.00.
2. If a participant receives cost-share payment(s) from another source(s), only the percent of the total cost of the project that the participant contributed is used to determine the Tax Credit.

D. Technical Responsibility

Technical and administrative responsibility is assigned to qualified technical DCR and District staff in consultation, where appropriate and based on the controlling standard, with DCR, Virginia Certified Nutrient Management Planner(s), NRCS, DOF, and VCE. Individuals certifying technical need and technical practice installation shall have appropriate certifications as identified above and/or Engineering Job Approval Authority (EJAA) for the designed and installed component(s). All practices are subject to spot check procedures and any other quality control measures.

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